



Michigan
Nurses
Association

An Affiliate of National Nurses United

Headquarters
2310 Jolly Oak Road
Okemos, MI 48864
phone: 517.349.5640
fax: 517.349.5818
web: www.minurses.org

Marquette
1500 W. Washington St., Suites 5 and 6
Marquette, MI 49855
phone: 906.226.7053
fax: 906.226.2701

May 19, 2015
Re: HB 4052

Dear members of the House Commerce and Trade Committee:

During my 35 years as a Registered Nurse, including time working at the Ingham County Health Department, I have always encouraged individuals and organizations to be proactive about health and safety.

Prevention is always preferable to dealing with the effects of illness. One of the ways we can do much better at prevention is by making sure workers are able to stay home when they are sick. When employees – in a variety of industries – go to work sick, all of us are at risk.

Too often, the reason employees go to work sick is because they cannot afford to not get paid.

Legislators can help protect the public by enacting and supporting public policy that enables sick workers to stay home. For example, Michigan should be encouraging communities to require local businesses to provide paid sick leave rather than blocking them. I urge you to vote **no** on HB 4052 so that our communities can protect public health by establishing such policies if they choose.

As an RN committed to protecting public health, there are two categories of workers that I am especially concerned about:

- **Restaurant/food service workers.** According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in five food service workers reports having gone to work ill. Sick workers are the cause of approximately half of foodborne illness outbreaks. One of the most massive cases in our state happened right here in mid-Michigan, when infectious employees who went work sick in 2006 at a Carrabba's in Eaton County. These ill employees caused nearly 400 people to become violently ill for days with norovirus.

While this was an especially severe case, we all have an increased risk of contracting foodborne illness as long as the vast majority of workers who prepare and serve our food – workers who earn very little in the first place – feel forced to work sick because they can't afford to stay home.

(over)



Michigan
Nurses
Association

An Affiliate of National Nurses United

Headquarters

2310 Jolly Oak Road
Okemos, MI 48864
phone: 517.349.5640
fax: 517.349.5818
web: www.minurses.org

Marquette

1500 W. Washington St., Suites 5 and 6
Marquette, MI 49855
phone: 906.226.7053
fax: 906.226.2701

- **Nurses and other healthcare workers.** It is especially troubling that nurses and other direct care workers may spread illness at work, but that is a sad reality for some whose employers do not provide paid sick time. Nurses and others in healthcare come in close, direct physical contact with patients, whether on home visits or in facilities. Transmission of illness from a caregiver can, unfortunately, occur under these conditions. Healthcare workers whose employers don't offer sick time face a terrible choice of losing money they need to support their families or possibly exposing their patients to illness.

I am particularly concerned about workers who interact with the most vulnerable members of our community. This includes those who make home visits to older citizens whose health is fragile.

In addition, workers in all fields who provide care for children and infants should especially be allowed to have paid time off when sick.

If more employers offered paid sick time, many cases of communicable disease could be contained or prevented. Instead, we see too many preventable instances that are very costly in terms of individual health, worker productivity, lawsuits and economic damage.

Thank you for your consideration, and **I hope that as you consider HB 4052, you will keep protecting public health foremost in your mind.**

Sincerely,

Jesusa Vasquez, RN, BSN, MPAH
1400 N. Gunnell Road
Eaton Rapids, MI 48827